

## Recommendations for the District Evaluation Advisory Committee (DEAC)

The critical role of DEACs in facilitating educator evaluation has been highlighted by New Jersey's pilot districts over the past two years. As a result, the requirement that a DEAC be established in every district was written into the TEACHNJ Act in August 2012. The value of the DEAC was discussed in the interim EPAC report published in February 2013 and the Department has provided further guidance and support regarding DEACs since the AchieveNJ regulations were proposed in March 2013. Most recently, a comprehensive set of recommendations for DEACs was published in the [Final Evaluation Pilot Advisory Committee \(EPAC\) Report](#). The following is an excerpt from this report.<sup>1</sup> Districts may use these recommendations to reflect upon the work and structure of their own DEACs for this year and future years, and discuss how to maximize the effectiveness of these important committees.

### Communicating Effectively

**Providing coordination to educator evaluation, the District Evaluation Advisory Committee can be a valuable communication vehicle.** Pilot districts used their DEACs in a variety of ways that added value to the process. Some of these roles are described below.

- **DEACs form a bridge between administrators and teachers and provide effective two-way communication.** One pilot district described the feedback given by DEAC members as having “great credibility” in the eyes of administrators and the superintendent. Information disseminated through the DEAC to the staff is equally important. One principal noted, “This group plays a critical role in turn-keying information for an acceptable transition with the teachers.” In many districts, teacher committee members became the “linchpins in their respective school buildings,” providing crucial support and information to other staff.
  - **DEACs provide a consistent message for training and implementation.** One project manager observed that his district's DEAC “created one voice for the pilot project,” and was used as a “clearinghouse to vet all the information and data.” In another district, DEAC members were trained in the new observation instrument and then turn-keyed “the exact training throughout the district and in each individual building.” DEAC members also can act as ambassadors to share the benefits of effective educator evaluation.
  - **DEACs provide useful “think tanks” to address complex problems.** Diverse and balanced committee membership allows the DEAC to provide a variety of perspectives when making recommendations. Comments from pilot district staff such as “all decisions were consensus-based,” and “decisions were made with everyone's best interests in mind,” show that the DEAC can be a powerful vehicle for gathering and addressing complex issues.
- DEACs can be a clearinghouse for frequently asked questions.** Woodstown-Pilesgrove Regional School District created a process to answer questions on an ongoing basis. Teachers, leaders, and community members enter questions on their website. The communications manager and DEAC discussed and crafted responses. Answers were then included in posted Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) that everyone could access.

#### Four Practical Tips for a Successful DEAC

1. Set agendas ahead of time and share them with members before the meeting.
2. Develop a decision-making process.
3. Decide in advance when decisions are recommendations and when they are binding.
4. Create a handbook of decisions by stakeholders.

~Linda Eno, Principal/Project Manager,  
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### Integrating Initiatives

**Districts should share an integrated vision connecting the multiple initiatives that they are implementing.** School districts face the challenge of implementing several initiatives, including but

<sup>1</sup> In the EPAC report, this material can be found on pages 15-18.

not limited to evaluation, within a narrow window of time. Recognizing the connections between initiatives is important at all levels of a school district. Districts must incorporate specific steps into their implementation plan to make sure that everyone sees the big picture. The following suggestions reflect various strategies that pilot districts used:

- **Make sure the DEAC understands the connections between initiatives**, enabling members to communicate this message clearly to staff in each building.
- **Send DEAC members and other lead staff to external presentations** similar to [those offered by the Department](#) since Spring 2013.
- Make presentations and documents available for faculty meetings so that everyone has access to the same information.
- Use Connected Action Roadmap<sup>2</sup> training to demonstrate connectivity.

## Planning

**Districts should create a detailed plan for evaluation implementation.** Many pilot districts effectively utilized their DEACs in planning for the year. One principal noted his DEAC was “critical in devising a plan that had buy-in from all the important stakeholders.” This had the additional advantage of involving leaders who were then well- situated to ensure the district plan was communicated throughout the district.

Creating a calendar of training events and observations and clearly defining the roles of the School Improvement Panel (SciP) and DEAC are valuable activities for school leaders who are trying to integrate components of the new evaluation system.

## Recommendations for Developing a Strong DEAC

Pilot districts provided a wealth of information regarding the best use and structure of DEACs. Listed below are the key takeaways:

- Build a DEAC that represents all stakeholder groups in the district;
- Train all DEAC members in each aspect of the evaluation system including the observation instrument, Student Growth Objectives, and Student Growth Percentiles;
- Use DEAC members to coordinate a training plan for staff in the district;
- Use the DEAC as a clearinghouse for all evaluation-related information to maintain a consistent message;
- Use a variety of communication tools for maximum impact, such as a district newsletter, website, and presentations at board and community meetings;
- Divide the DEAC into subgroups that can specialize in various aspects of the evaluation system and become a valuable resource for the district;
- Make DEAC meetings open to all;
- Meet on a regular schedule; and
- Publish meeting presentations, handouts, and minutes.

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<sup>2</sup> The Connected Action Roadmap is a professional development program offered by the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association. It connects Common Core State Standards, student learning, professional learning, and teacher and leader effectiveness to the work of professional learning communities.

[http://fea.njpsa.org/documents/pdf/2012conf/CAR\\_fall\\_conf\\_2012.pdf](http://fea.njpsa.org/documents/pdf/2012conf/CAR_fall_conf_2012.pdf)